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CATECHISM

FOR THE
USE of the DEISTS.

K. Philander
By a CLERGYMAN of the CHURCH of
ENGLAND.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS, at the Oxford
Arms in Warwick-lane.

M D C C X X X I X .

(Price Four-pence.)

THE HISTORY OF

THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

LONDON

Printed by W. Stansfeld, at the

(Price 1s. 6d.)

To the DEISTS.

Gentlemen,

YOU are grown so considerable in your Numbers, that I think no body can justly blame a well-meaning Man for endeavouring to convince you, that you are Members of Society. In order to which I have drawn up a Catechism, I hope so calculated as to discover that I am a Friend to Mankind, without provoking the Enmity of you, or of your Adver-

faries; for I have carefully avoided every contested Point, and have asserted no Doctrine which is not allowed and maintained by every Religious System in the World — only a conditional Eternity of future Rewards and Punishments introduced itself; and, I think, may be introduced into any Religion without violating any of its Tenets. I persuade myself, that a strict Adherence to the Doctrines of this Catechism would make us useful Members of Society; and I delight myself with the pleasing Reflection of having formed a Creed, which may prove a Foundation Stone of universal Conformity in Religion, since it contains the Fundamentals

pro-

profess'd by *Christians, Jews, Turks, Infidels* and *Hereticks*. I don't foresee that any Mischief can result from this Catechism; and it would be proper to instil it into every Child of every Persuasion, as it would enlarge the Apprehensions of a Deity in the Unlearned, and does not break in upon the particular Doctrines of any Religion. In the mean Time, I must confess that my principal Design in publishing this, was to inform you Free-thinkers, that a Disbelief of Christianity does not release your Obligation to Morality; and to let you see that every thing which is injurious to Society is as strictly prohibited by the Religion of Nature,

ture, as it is by Revelation. Some of you Gentlemen, when they have leap'd over the Pale of the Church, are apt to fancy themselves Commoners of Nature, (in the worst Acceptation of the Phrase) and use their Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciousness. I think you esteem Benevolence the Sum of your Duty to Mankind ; remember then, that want of Virtue is want of Benevolence ; and Society must fall in course, if we pursue our private Satisfaction only. In short, let the Contention be, who shall most promote the Good of Mankind ; and when the Deists fairly prove their Pretensions to superior Goodness, in God's Name let them have the Praise.

In

In a little Time I propose to publish a Liturgy corresponding to this Catechism, containing the several Offices of our Common Prayer, to which will be annexed some Proposals for the due Regulation of your publick Devotions, that you may be reduced to some Oeconomy, and be better employ'd than in controverting the Religion of other People.

PHILANDER.

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A
C A T E C H I S M
FOR THE
USE of the DEISTS.

Q. *W*HO made you ?
A. GOD.

Q. *To what Purpose did GOD make you ?*

A. To be happy.

Q. *If GOD created you to be happy, have not you a Right to promote your own Happiness ?*

B

A. I

A. I have certainly a Right to promote my own Happiness ; but as GOD created all Men to be happy, I have no Right to promote my Happiness in a Manner injurious to Society, because if every Man should pursue his own Satisfaction, without Regard to the Happiness of others, we should all be mistaken, and the Design of GOD in our Creation would be disappointed.

Q. Do you think then a Man can be guilty of Injustice by promoting his own Happiness by any Means?

A. To be sure he may ; for as GOD cannot act by Partiality, but has created all Men to be happy, 'tis plain that whoever pursues his own Happiness by Methods which he knows to be destructive of the general Happiness, evidently robs others of that Share of Happiness which GOD design'd them ; and argues by his Actions, that his Happiness only was intended by the Creator, which is apparently false and unjust.

Q. But

Q. But Men who are thus unjust are so frequently successful in this World, and Men of Integrity, (who preserve Society from mouldering into Ruin) are so often unhappy, that it seems more advantageous to be unjust than to be just.

A. It may perhaps seem so, and that deceitful Appearance has betray'd Abundance into Pursuits of Pleasure and Profit, without Regard to the Miseries they occasion ; but if every Man would steadily consult the general Good of Mankind, 'tis evident that the Advantage would be found on the Side of Justice ; for the general Stock of Happiness would then be encreased, and by Consequence the Happiness of the Individuals.

Q. You say true ; if all Men were benevolent, we should certainly find our Account in it : But since too many are influenced by selfish Views, and since Men of Integrity run a risk of being injur'd, where human Laws are too imperfect to protect them, Why should any Man neglect an Opportunity of indulging his Inclinations, and of

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securing

securing to himself the best Share of Happiness he can?

A. Since Reason teaches us the Design of GOD in our Creation, and since GOD is a common Father of us all, it plainly follows, that they who hold fast their Integrity will in a future State be recompensed the Injuries they have received from the ungovern'd Passion of others ; for as GOD created us to be happy, it cannot be suppos'd that he will suffer any one to be miserable, only for having contributed to that Design.

Q. What do you conceive will be the Nature of that future Recompense?

A. Besides the Approbation of GOD, Improvement in Knowledge, and other inconceivable Enjoyments, it seems naturally to follow, that all of this benevolent Disposition will be placed together, and sure no greater Heaven can be wish'd than such a Situation, free from Infirmities of the Body.

Q. And what Punishment do you suppose will be inflicted on those who disturb Mankind

kind by a licentious Indulgence of their Passions ?

A. Besides a Sense of GOD's Displeasure, (which must fill the Mind with Horror) unsociable and unbenevolent Tempers will probably be placed together, and torment each other ; or else they'll fly from each other into Solitude, and either Situation will be sufficiently miserable.

Q. *Do you believe that these Rewards and Punishments will be everlasting ?*

A. We may very reasonably believe that the Happiness of good Men will continue for ever, because it would seem to call in Question the Wisdom or Justice of the Creator, should he discontinue it after any Term of Time, unless for Misbehaviour. And as I think it possible for those who shall be admitted among the Just to forfeit their Place, and to be discarded for ill Behaviour ; so by Parity of Justice, there seems room to imagine, that the Wretched may be admitted among the Happy, when a Change of Temper has fitted them for social Happiness : So that I suppose a conditional,

ditional, but not an absolute Eternity of Rewards and Punishments.

Q. Thus our Obligation to moral Virtue is firmly establiſh'd. But do you think this the whole Duty of Man?

A. No. Besides this Benevolence towards our Fellow Creatures, we owe the greatest Gratitude to Almighty God, for having brought us into Being, and placed us in Circumstances which afford a fair Prospect of Happiness here, and a certain Prospect of Happiness hereafter.

Q. And what Duty does this Gratitude exact from us?

A. Acknowledgments of our Creator's Goodness, to be made from Time to Time, in such Manner as may be most proper to express our Gratitude, and to keep it alive.

Q. Is there any other Duty incumbent upon us?

A. Yes: For as we are sometimes misled by a Partiality to ourselves, and act in Contradiction to the Good of Mankind in general,

general, it is our Duty to humble ourselves before our most merciful Father, to confess our Crimes, and to express our full Resolution of amending our Conduct for the future.

Q. Pray give me a Summary of your Religion, both in Speculation and Practice?

A. I believe that there is one God, the Maker of all Things visible or invisible. I believe that he created all Men to be happy, both in this World and in the next. I believe that they who contribute to this Design will be rewarded in a future State, and that they who do not contribute to it will be punish'd in a future State. And lastly, I believe it my Duty to keep in my Heart a warm Sense of Gratitude to God for my Creation, and for my Hopes of Happiness both here and hereafter.

Q. Beside this Creed of yours, I should be glad to hear what Set of Laws you regulate your Conduct by?

A. My Laws are the Laws of Reason, and are these following.

I. Thou

I.

Thou shalt not pay Adoration and Divine Honours to any Being besides the Creator of the Universe.

II.

Thou shalt not treat the Name or Notion of thy great Creator with Familiarity and Contempt.

III.

Thou shalt attend on publick Worship, as thy Health and Circumstances will permit.

IV.

Thou shalt live in due Subordination and Obedience to Authority, whether Natural or Civil.

V.

Thou shalt do no Murder directly or indirectly.

VI.

Thou shalt not falsely blast the Credit of another, directly or indirectly.

VII.

Thou shalt not wrong another of his Property, directly or indirectly.

VIII. Thou

VIII.

Thou shalt avoid a licentious Indulgence of Appetite, lest thou injure thyself or others.

IX.

Thou shalt in all Things consult the Happiness of others as well as of thyself.

Q. As your Religion is founded on the Belief of a God, I desire you'll prove the Existence of a God.

A. The Being of a God is thus prov'd.

First, The Faculty of Reason, which every Man may discern within himself, sufficiently demonstrates to him his own Existence, because every Faculty must belong to Something.

Secondly, From his own Existence, every Man is assur'd that Something has existed from all Eternity ; because it is utterly impossible that any thing should start into Being without Cause.

Thirdly, As then there is an absolute Necessity that Something must have existed from all Eternity ; so whatever has thus existed from Eternity must exist independent

dent of any other Being, and by an absolute Necessity of Existence inherent in its own Nature; because, if it is now absolutely necessary that Something must have existed from all Eternity, there must have always been the same absolute Necessity of the Existence of Something.

Fourthly, This absolute Necessity of Existence must be lodged either in a Succession of Beings, or in a continued Being. But no Succession of Beings can exist by a Necessity inherent in its own Nature; because the Idea of necessary Existence is so far from being included in that of Succession, that it is directly contradictory to it, inasmuch as every Member of the Succession is supposed only temporary; wherefore to suppose a Series of Beings self-existent, is to join two contradictory Ideas; *viz.* an absolute Necessity of Existence, and an absolute Necessity of Non-Existence.—Again; Whatever has existed from all Eternity cannot cease to be, because Existence is evidently and absolutely in the Nature of a Being which has always existed: And we cannot (without a manifest Contradiction) *suppose* an End to the Existence

stence of any thing which cannot cease to be ; but an imaginary End to any Succession of Beings is * obvious, only by supposing no Successor to the last : (for the Notion of a Being, which is to exist but a determin'd Space of Time, does not convey the least Hint of an absolute Necessity that such a limited Being should leave such a limited Successor) Therefore every Succession of Beings is dependent, and may cease to be.

But if we examine the Nature of a continued Being, we find no Possibility of its Non-Existence ; it is secure from all other Beings by its Independency ; and as its Principle of Existence is lodg'd within itself, to suppose the Principles of Non-Existence lodg'd within it too, is to suppose two contradictory Ideas.

Fifthly, Whatever has existed from Eternity, and by the Energy of its own Nature, cannot be under any Limitation

* Obj. *If a Series be supposed eternal and self-existent, we cannot suppose an End to its Existence.*

Ans. This Objection only asserts, that the Idea of an absolute Necessity of Existence includes the Idea of absolute Necessity of Existence.

from another Being, otherwise two contradictory Ideas would be join'd together, *viz.* Dependency and Independency. An independent Being then cannot be limited from any external Cause: And to suppose such a Being under Limitation from its own Nature, is to join together two contradictory Ideas, *viz.* a Necessity of Existence, and a Necessity of Non-Existence; because every Limitation is a Prohibition of Existence. The Force of this Argument discovers itself in Regard to Time sooner than in Regard to Space, for we very readily apprehend, that a self-existent Being cannot want Existence during any Portion of Time, either from external or internal Causes. And it is equally certain, that a self-existent Being cannot want Existence in any Point of Space, either from external or internal Causes: And as it is a most certain Truth, that every Limitation is caused by some superior Agent, it is very certain, that an independent Being cannot be subject to any Limitation. An independent or self-existent Being then is infinite, and fills every Point of Space, as well as every Point of Time.

Sixthly,

Sixthly, It is impossible that absolute Necessity should include Contrarieties: Therefore all Qualities which attend upon absolute Necessity are compatible, and may be united in one Being; there is therefore an absolute Necessity for the Existence of one such Being only; and consequently there is but one necessarily existent Being. Again, absolute Necessity must be similar and uniform; that is, if there were more necessarily existent Beings than one they must be alike, otherwise absolute Necessity would differ from absolute Necessity: And, as a Being necessarily existent must be infinite in Extension, if there were two or more such Beings, it would follow, that two or more Beings of the same Kind might exist at the same Time, in the same Place, which is absurd; therefore there is but one self-existent Being.

Seventhly, As there is but one self-existent Being, all other Beings must be dependent on, and must derive their Existence and their Perfections from that one self-existent Being; for a Perfection can no more start into Being without a Cause than a Substance can.

Eighthly,

Eighthly, Intelligence, Justice, Truth, Power and Goodness are Perfections actually existing in some dependent Beings, and therefore must exist in the supreme Cause. And as our great Creator is incapable of being limited, these Perfections must be infinite in him, in such Manner as they admit of Infinity.

F I N I S.